

## **CAREER GUIDE FOR SECRETARIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS, AND FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS/OFFICE MANAGERS**

SOC Codes:

43-6014	Secretaries, except legal, medical and executive
43-9199	Office and administrative support workers, all other
43-6011	Executive secretaries and administrative assistants
43-1011.02	First line supervisors, administrative support
51-1011	First line supervisors, managers of product and operating workers

Pay Bands: 2, 3 in Administrative and Office Support ([Salary Structure](#))

Pay Bands: 4, 5 in General Administration ([Salary Structure](#))

**Standard Occupational Descriptions:** This career guide covers a wide range of secretarial and administrative support occupations:

*Secretaries and Office and Administrative Support Workers* perform routine clerical and administrative functions such as drafting correspondence, scheduling appointments, organizing and maintaining paper and electronic files, or providing information to callers.

*Executive Secretaries and Administrative Assistants* provide high-level administrative support by conducting research, preparing statistical reports, handling information requests, and performing clerical functions such as preparing correspondence, receiving visitors, arranging conference calls, and scheduling meetings. May also train and supervise lower-level clerical staff.

*First-line supervisors* supervise and coordinate activities of workers involved in providing administrative or inspection support.

If you would like more information on the occupations of Secretaries, Executive Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, go to <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos151.htm>, for a more detailed look at the field prepared by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics in their "Occupational Outlook Handbook".

**Secretarial, Administrative Support, and Office Management positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to two primary career groups:**

### Administrative and Office Support:

- [Administrative & Office Specialist II](#)
- [Administrative & Office Specialist III](#)

### General Administration:

- [General Administration Supervisor I/Coordinator I](#)
- [General Administration Supervisor II/Coordinator II](#)

While Secretaries, Office and Administrative Support and their first-line supervisors primarily are located within these career groups, individual employees work in a wide variety of jobs in every agency across the Commonwealth.

Because the Administrative & Office Specialist and General Administration Supervisor/Coordinator roles offer such a wide range of job opportunities in so many locations, it is possible to have a long rewarding career staying in any or all of these Roles.

At the same time, secretarial and administrative support occupations have historically offered many Commonwealth employees the “ground floor” opportunity they were seeking to prepare them for other transition to other occupations within the Commonwealth, as they acquire additional experience, professional development and/or education. This may be a career planning option to consider if you want to pursue career advancement, or more technical or managerial opportunities within the Commonwealth depending on your training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest include, but are not limited to:

[Audit and Management Services](#)

[Financial Services](#)

[Hearing and Legal Services](#)

[Human Resources Services](#)

[Land Acquisition and Property Management](#)

[Policy Analysis and Planning](#)

[Procurement](#)

[Education Administration](#)

[Public Relations and Marketing](#)

[Training and Instruction](#)

[Information Technology Specialists](#)

[Health Care Compliance](#)

[Emergency Services](#)

[Retail Operations](#)

Employees in secretarial, office and administrative support and related supervisory occupations may choose to pursue additional education and/or experience in order to pursue a career in the content field of the agency where she or he works. In this case, s/he undergoes a career transition to a new career field, and leaves the field of secretarial and administrative support in order to advance her/his career.

## **SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS**

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

### **Skills**

**Note:** *The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Secretaries and Administrative Support commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

### **Skills:**

1. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
2. Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
3. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
4. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
5. Talking to others to convey information effectively.

6. Actively looking for ways to help people.
7. Managing one's own time and the time of others.

**An executive secretary or administrative assistant may also have skills in:**

1. Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
2. Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
3. Motivating, developing, and directing people as they work, identifying the best people for the job.
4. Obtaining and seeing to the appropriate use of equipment, facilities, and materials needed to do certain work.
5. Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
6. Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem solving and decision-making.
7. Determining how money will be spent to get the work done, and accounting for these expenditures.
8. Identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.
9. Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
10. Identifying measures or indicators of system performance and the actions needed to improve or correct performance, relative to the goals of the system.
11. Determining how a system should work and how changes in conditions, operations, and the environment will affect outcomes.

**Knowledge**

**Note:** The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Secretaries and Administrative Support commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.

**The Knowledge of:**

1. Administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.
2. The structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
3. Computer hardware and applications software.
4. Administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.
5. The principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
6. Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications.
7. Economic and accounting principles and practices, the financial markets, banking and the analysis and reporting of financial data.
8. The principles and methods for moving people or goods by air, rail, sea, or road, including the relative costs and benefits.

9. Media production, communication, and dissemination techniques and methods. This includes alternative ways to inform and entertain via written, oral, and visual media.

*In addition, Executive Secretaries, Administrative Assistants and Office Managers are expected to have knowledge of:*

1. Business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique, production methods, and coordination of people and resources.
2. The principles and procedures for personnel recruitment, selection, training, compensation and benefits, labor relations and negotiation, and personnel information systems.

### **Abilities**

**Note:** *The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Secretaries and Administrative Support positions as commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The **Ability** to:

1. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
2. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
3. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
4. Identify and understand the speech of another person.
5. Speak clearly so others can understand you.
6. Communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.
7. Add, subtract, multiply, or divide quickly and correctly.
8. Shift back and forth between two or more activities or sources of information (such as speech, sounds, touch, or other sources).
9. Concentrate on a task over a period of time without being distracted.
10. Quickly and accurately compare similarities and differences among sets of letters, numbers, objects, pictures, or patterns. The things to be compared may be presented at the same time or one after the other. This ability also includes comparing a presented object with a remembered object.
11. Arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).
12. Remember information such as words, numbers, pictures, and procedures.
13. Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
14. Combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a relationship among seemingly unrelated events).
15. Generate or use different sets of rules for combining or grouping things in different ways.

### **Tasks**

**Note:** *The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Secretaries and Administrative Support. employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.*

Typical **Tasks** include:

1. Answers telephone and gives information to callers, takes messages, or transfers calls to appropriate individuals.
2. Opens incoming mail and routes mail to appropriate individuals.
3. Answers routine correspondence.
4. Composes and distributes meeting notes, correspondence, and reports.
5. Schedules appointments.
6. Maintains calendar and coordinates conferences and meetings.
7. Takes dictation in shorthand or by machine and transcribes information.
8. Locates and attaches appropriate file to incoming correspondence requiring reply.
9. Files correspondence and other records.
10. Makes copies of correspondence and other printed matter.
11. Arranges travel schedules and reservations.
12. Greets and welcomes visitors, determines nature of business, and conducts visitors to employer or appropriate person.
13. Compiles and maintains lists and records, using typewriter or computer.
14. Records and types minutes of meetings, using typewriter or computer.
15. Compiles and types statistical reports, using typewriter or computer.
16. Mails newsletters, promotional material and other information.
17. Orders and dispenses supplies.
18. Prepares and mails checks.
19. Collects and disburses funds from cash account and keeps records.
20. Provides customer services such as, order placement and account information.

*In addition, Executive Secretaries, Administrative Assistants, and Office Managers typically:*

1. Coordinate and/or direct office services, such as records and budget preparation, personnel, and housekeeping to aid executives.
2. Prepare records and reports, such as recommendations for solutions of administrative problems and annual reports.
3. File and retrieve corporation documents, records, and reports.
4. Analyze operating practices and procedures to create new or to revise existing methods.
5. Interpret administrative and operating policies and procedures for employees.
6. Study management methods to improve workflow, simplify reporting procedures, or implement cost reductions.
7. Plan conferences.
8. Read and answer correspondence.

## **INTERESTED?**

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

Secretarial and administrative support work is called mainly a “**Conventional Occupation**” because it frequently involves following set procedures and routines. These occupations can include working with data and details more than with ideas. Usually there is a clear line of authority to follow.

Secretarial and administrative support occupations are also “**Enterprising**” because they often involve starting up and carrying out projects. These occupations can involve leading people and making many decisions. Sometimes they require risk taking and often deal with business.

Secretarial and administrative support occupations often involve helping or providing service to others, and frequently involve working with, communicating with, or even teaching people. Therefore, there is a “**Social**” element to secretarial and administrative support work.

## **LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

As secretaries and administrative assistants gain experience, they can earn the Certified Professional Secretary (CPS) designation or the Certified Administrative Professional (CAP) designation by meeting certain experience and/or educational requirements and passing an examination. The International Association of Administrative Professionals administers these certifications. For more information on the CPS and CAP examinations, go to <http://www.iaap-hq.org/CPS/Recertification.pdf>

Generally these are not required for secretarial and administrative support positions in state government. However, to improve career advancement opportunities, you should consider the advantages of demonstrating your expertise and include this step in your personal career development plan.

There are professional development and certificate programs, associate degree and undergraduate degree focused on business, which are academic ways to demonstrate capability in the field. They are not required for employment in Virginia, but are one way to showcase your abilities to a prospective hiring official. Individuals interested in future career advancement should strongly consider undergraduate education. Experience in the field with excellent references another way to demonstrate your abilities when seeking a secretarial or administrative support position.

## **EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

High school graduates who have basic office skills may qualify for entry-level secretarial positions. However, employers increasingly require extensive knowledge of software applications, such as word processing, spreadsheets, and database management.

As office automation continues to evolve, retraining and continuing education will remain an integral part of secretarial jobs. Changes in the office environment have increased the demand for secretaries and administrative assistants who are adaptable and versatile. Secretaries and administrative assistants may have to attend classes to learn how to operate new office technologies, such as information storage systems, scanners, the Internet, or new updated software packages, or utilize online education.

Secretaries and administrative assistants acquire skills in various ways. Training ranges from high school vocational education programs that teach office skills and keyboarding to 1- and 2-year programs in office administration offered by business schools, vocational-technical institutes, and community colleges. Many temporary placement agencies also provide formal training in computer and office skills. Many skills are often acquired, however, through on-the-job instruction by other employees or by equipment and software vendors. Specialized training programs are available for students planning to become medical or legal secretaries or administrative technology specialists. Bachelor's degrees and professional certifications are becoming increasingly important as business continues to become more global.

For more information on the academic (2 year) and workforce development educational courses available at **Virginia Community Colleges**, visit the Virginia Community College System website at <http://www.so.cc.va.us>.

For more information on **colleges and universities** in Virginia go to [www.explorevirginiacolleges.com](http://www.explorevirginiacolleges.com)

Local communities often offer computer and office management courses. Check your local and regional counties, libraries, and vocational schools. There are also private companies that offer computer and office training. Be sure to thoroughly check the credentials of any private company before enrolling in a course.

The Commonwealth of Virginia sponsors One-Stop Workforce Development Centers around the state that may be able to direct you to where training is available if you are having trouble finding sources for secretarial or computer software education. For a list of One-Stop Centers in Virginia go to <http://www.vec.state.va.us/wia.cfm?loc=wia&info=localwia>.

## **COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES**

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

### **The Commonwealth Competencies are:**

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: [http://jobs.state.va.us/cc\\_planningctr.htm](http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm). For the competencies, we first list the competencies

and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

## **COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH**

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example: *For Secretaries and Office Support Workers*

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES		PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES
1	Administrative & Office Specialist I	→	1	Administrative & Office Specialist I
				↓
2	Administrative & Office Specialist II	→	2	Administrative & Office Specialist II
				↓
3	Administrative & Office Specialist III	→	3	Administrative & Office Specialist III

*For Executive Secretaries, Administrative Assistants, and Office Managers*

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES	PAY BAND	MANAGEMENT ROLES
4	General Admin Supv I/Coord I		
	↓		
5	General Admin Supv II/Coord II	5	General Administration Manager I
		→	↓
6			General Administration Manager II
7			General Administration Manager III
8			General Administration Manager IV

## **Sample Career Path**

### **Administrative & Office Specialist II**

Secretarial occupations, except for legal, medical and executive secretaries, fall into the administrative and office specialist II Role (within the Administrative and Office Support Career Group). Within this Role alone there are a variety of different jobs available throughout all agencies within the Commonwealth, based on the needs each agency has. The specific duties of individual jobs will vary according to the job description that is including in Employee Work Profile (EWP) that is developed for each position.

There are advancement opportunities *within* the Administrative and Office Specialist II role, based on acquiring experience, skills and education, so that a more senior position within the role, but with greater responsibilities, and possibly higher salary, is a possibility.

Usually employees in this role who choose further career advancement move into the Administrative and Office Specialist III role, and a higher pay band. It is also possible to move laterally, staying at the same pay band, or up to a pay band 3, into a role in another Career Group that is of interest. If an employee moves to another Career Group, some skills, experience or education must be demonstrated that will qualify that person for movement into that new Career Group.

### **Administrative & Office Specialist III**

The Administrative & Office Specialist III Role is extremely broad, and many positions exist within the Commonwealth for this Role, both as an individual contributor and as a first-line supervisor. In fact, occasionally there are people in this Role who do entry-level work in human resources (employment, recruitment, placement – but not payroll or timekeeping), procurement, eligibility interviewing, or even statistical work. Executive secretaries, administrative assistants, and first line supervisors of office and administrative support workers may all fall into this Career Group.

*Once at the top of the Administrative and Office Support Career Group, and at pay band 3, an employee must transition to other career groups within the Administrative Services Family or even other occupational families within the Commonwealth's job structure in order to obtain career advancement beyond the current level. For example:*

### **General Administration Supervisor I/Coordinator I**

This role provides career tracks for administrative specialists/coordinators and administrative supervisors who perform or supervise a variety of administrative and business functions in a unit, non-retail business, facility, or field office. The first career track is for supervisors who manage a variety of office and administrative employees performing a variety of well-defined administrative, business, and financial operations. The second career track is for administrative specialists who provide administrative support for program areas or an administrator.

### **General Administration Supervisor II/Coordinator II**

This role provides career tracks for either administrative specialist/coordinator or administrative services supervisors. The first career track is for senior-level professionals who plan, coordinate, and perform administrative activities for executives. The second career track is for supervisors of multiple administrative units within a division or facility requiring planning, coordinating and supervising of a variety of administrative and business services.

(Go to **Job Structure** <http://www.dpt.state.va.us/services/compens/careergroups/families.htm> for a complete list of Commonwealth occupational families and career groups.)

In moving to another career group, you would begin to specialize in another area in the same Occupational Family (Administrative Services), such as General Administration, Program Administration, Financial Services, Human Resources, Policy Planning & Analysis, Land Acquisition and Property Management, and more.

You might even move to a different Occupational Family. For example, you may obtain education and experience in the occupational family of Education and Media Services, Public Relations & Marketing Career Group – and obtain a position as a Public Relations & Marketing Specialist III, pay band 4.

In deciding what career group to select as your area for further education and specialization, keep in mind that the key to career success is to do what you do well *and* enjoy doing.

In sum, secretarial and administrative support work is used in a wide range of functional areas, providing employees in this occupation with opportunities to use their skills in a wide range of office environments where administrative services are necessary to complete the mission of the agency. Your individual interests and experiences will play a large part in what career group and agency you ultimately choose to advance and enrich your career

## **ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:**

O\*NET - on-line resource for career and occupational information  
[http://online.onetcenter.org/gen\\_search\\_page](http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page) (Type in “secretary” in the “find occupations” section, then press GO.)

Virginia Employment Commission – information on job openings.  
<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook – information on the career field of secretary/executive secretary/administrative assistant  
<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos151.htm>

Career One Stop - nationwide career resource and job search website.  
<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network  
[http://www2.ccps.virginia.edu/career\\_prospects/searchstats/search\\_page.html](http://www2.ccps.virginia.edu/career_prospects/searchstats/search_page.html)  
Select search by career name or keyword. Type “secretary” in “text search” then press the arrow, then press “secretary”.

International Association of Administrative Professionals  
<http://www.iaap-hq.org>

National Management Association  
<http://www.nma1.org/>